

ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC RACISM IN SCHOOLS OF PUBLIC HEALTH: WHERE WE WANT TO BE

FOR STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND ADMINISTRATION:

- Professors co-create their syllabi with the input and guidance of students, people with relevant lived experience, and other experts. Course content should highlight a diverse array of perspectives, and many pieces of course content should amplify the voices of racial and ethnic minorities.
- Course content is the foundation of the learning that happens in MPH programs. ALL courses should be grounded in the principles of health equity, social justice, and human rights.



TALKING ABOUT RACISM

All schools should make a commitment to talking honestly and plainly about racism. Race is not a risk factor or a determinant of health. Living within a system of white supremacy while being a person of color is. It is important to explicitly name the forces and communities that we are talking about.



PRIORITIZING COMMUNITIES' HISTORICAL CONTEXT

All students should be taught the complete, unaltered truth about the history of their universities and academic fields. All universities in the US (except tribal colleges and universities) stand on land stolen from Indigenous people. Many schools continue to negatively impact the neighborhoods and communities of color around them, with gentrification, rapidly expanding campuses, and prohibitively expensive housing. Many academic fields were built on the exploitation of people of color all across the world. We must not only be aware of this history, but prioritize it and let it impact the decisions that we make.



REORIENTING GRADES

Graduate schools should abolish their grading systems and institute a Pass/Fail system across all programs. An extreme focus on grades, competition, and rubrics based on often subjective metrics emphasizes the idea that people can “achieve” a comprehensive public health education based on readings and papers alone. There is no arriving or perfection in this work, and we will not create change through an environment that fosters competition or comparison. Instead, we are all together on a constant journey of learning and unlearning. Programs that hyperfocus on grades and competition take away from the importance and reality of that journey.



ELIMINATING BARRIERS TO PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

All education should be as accessible as possible. Graduate schools should remove any standardized tests from their application criteria, and evaluate applicants more holistically. A focus on personal statements, relevant experience, and letters of recommendation will ensure admitted students have passion and commitment, instead of just financial access to standardized test preparation services.

Undergraduate and graduate colleges and universities, trade schools, and community colleges should all transition toward a tuition-free model. This monumental shift in accessibility would allow anyone who wants to obtain an education to do so, without taking on a staggering amount of debt.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to Ali Zuercher, Elizabeth Holland, and Geni Eng for creating this one-pager, to members of the EQUITY Work group (Amanda Rietti, Susanna Whitman, Caroline Ritchie, Nyla Ruiz, Brittany Price, and Courtney Woods) who collaborated to create this content, and to the inaugural cohort of the EQUITY concentration for contributing to the learning community from which these ideas have developed.



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